

# Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults



**Want to better understand mental illness, learn how to help someone experiencing a crisis and possibly save a life?**

**Take a Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults class!**

## What is Mental Health First Aid?

**Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Older Adults** is an 8-hour training course designed for adults – family members, caregivers, nursing staff, health and human services workers, etc. – who interact with people over the age of 65. The program gives community members key skills to help an older person who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional treatment is received or until the crisis resolves.

The program expands mental health “literacy” and reduces the social distance created by negative attitudes and perceptions of individuals with mental illnesses. The standard course is based on the international MHFA Guidelines and adapted for the U.S. These guidelines were developed using consensus of mental health consumers and professionals.

The Wellness, Health Promotion & Prevention staff of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board is training our County government workforce and our community members in Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults.

## Course Content

### Developing mental health problems covered:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Traumatic events
- Psychosis
- Substance abuse
- Unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in older adults

### Mental health crises covered:

- Suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- Non-suicidal self-injury
- Panic attacks
- Severe psychotic episodes
- Effects from substance and alcohol use
- Aggressive behavior

Participants will learn the signs and symptoms of these mental health problems in older adults, where and how to get help and what sort of help has been shown by research to be effective.

**Questions? Contact Lori Naveda at  
703-538-7476 or [Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lori.Naveda@fairfaxcounty.gov)**

## MHFA for Older Adults Outcomes

Individuals trained in the program:

- Increase their knowledge of signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental illnesses and addictions in older adults.
- Can identify multiple types of professional and self-help resources for older adults who have a mental illness or addiction.
- Have more confidence that they can and are more likely to help older adults who are in distress.
- Better understand the impact mental illnesses have on an older adult, their family, and communities.
- Help to reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses.
- Show increased mental wellness themselves.

**Ready to take a class?**

**Go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) and  
search on “MHFA”**



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**Community  
Services Board**

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Turn over →

# Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults Frequently Asked Questions

## Who should take a Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults course?

Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults is intended for adults – family members, caregivers, nursing staff, health and human services workers, etc. – who interact with people over the age of 65 and are interested in learning more about mental illness and addiction. Not sure? Just ask us!

## Is there evidence to support the effectiveness of the program?

Yes, there is strong evidence of outcomes. MHFA USA is listed in the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.

Visit [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/about/research](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/about/research) for more information.

## How long does it take to complete the Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults program?

The 8-hour class is usually conducted as a two-day seminar (two half-day classes). Certification lasts three years.

## Can I set up a customized class specifically for my job, church, organization, etc.?

Yes! Visit our MHFA page to learn how to request a custom class: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board) and click on "Online & in-person training."

## How many participants are needed to hold a class?

A minimum of 15 participants are needed to schedule a class, with a maximum of 25.

## What types of crisis interventions are covered?

Trainees are taught how to apply a 5-step strategy in high risk situations such as helping an older adult through panic attack or any traumatic event, engaging with someone who may be suicidal, or assisting an individual who has overdosed. Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults training provides the opportunity to practice the intervention strategy rather than to just hear about it. This simple experience can make it easier to actually apply the knowledge in a real-life situation.

## Is there a cost to take the class?

The class fee is \$25 which covers materials. Fairfax County Government employees may attend free of charge.

## Other Mental Health First Aid courses available...

- Mental Health First Aid (Adult)
- Youth Mental Health First Aid (for adults who live or work with adolescents)
- Primeros Auxilios para Salud Mental (Spanish Mental Health First Aid)
- Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety (for police and others who work in public safety roles)

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and search on "MHFA" to learn more!**

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